

Planning my EUROPEAN ADVENTURE. It starts in Italy. Therefore it must begin, at least, in pure piacere. Rick Steves taught me that. I'll be relaxing on some fine seagoing vessel or at least an approved flotation device. Then I will somehow find myself slowly floating into Venice, and floating a whole lot more while I'm there, whether in a gondola or the heavens of St. Mark's. Lotti. Missa Ottavi Toni. I will just keep floating, west to Padua on the Bacchiglione. While on the river I hope to catch a glimpse of the fishes whose ancestors my hometown's patron Holy Tony once gave a sermon. Finally reaching dry land woo-hoo terra firma, I kiss the ground! I will then dance a stately Pavan toward his major shrine there. From this point my overall plan to end in Lisbon allows Holy Tony to return to his Portuguese birthplace, in the same place where Helen and Sheryl Tiseth ended their beautiful journey for Thomas last November. It's all coming together. My exact navigation toward Lombardy is uncertain, a peek into Mantua's not bad at least to honor Virgil, Bergamasks and bergamot in Bergamo I dunno, but I must spend a day in Cremona to celebrate Monteverdi's birth and bask in the place of the violin's invention, then hit the big city to see if they have any more different flavors of Milanos there, I already know they have Ambrosia. Don't worry Tuscany I'd be a fool to miss that Brunelleschi dome and David and his famous penis and your cookbook-cover-ready countryside but I'm headed south now mainly to hit mid-thigh Arezzo where Guido, the Man with the Plan and the Hand and the Lines and the Notes made all tunes now readily shareable more than 1000 years ago. He made all of it possible for you little bitches who imagine you belong to some pure and noble oral tradition where being literate is for fancy folks. I see you there with your Mel Bay Big Note Books. It's fancy folks what's can afford all your expensive gadgets. You ignore Guido and worship a bunch of glorified electricians but not me. Masterworks are so fancy they're produced with an inkwell and parchment by candlelight in a moldy dungeon where the torture screams are audible. You're too weak to rock this hard. They put in their 100,000 hours WITH NO AIR CONDITIONING, you shoot for 1,000 Likes and seek to optimize audience engagement RANT OVER from me Mr. Fancy Pants with his monocle sipping tea with my pinky in the air. Why I'd like to kneecap you. Speaking of which, then of course it's to Rome. And Rome. And Rome again. It may get ever slightly Vatican. I hear there's an old sports stadium

that's out of repair. I'll be there blasting Respighi's Circenses out of an 80s boom box. Reynolds Washam will be there in full gladiatorial regalia to help me feed the hungry lions. You know that's what I do best. Rey's a cat lover too, I know. And the Pantheon. And some pines. And Saint Cecilia's, Stephanie Norris. And some catacombs, Dave Fisher. And some fountains. Good, I'll be thirsty by this point. But from here is where I trace a part of the Tiseth's travels for Thomas. I will ask them to relate to me the exact path they took so I may retrace it well, first down to Naples for my usual comfort foods of pizza and ice cream and don't forget those doomy Vesuvius views, then on to Port Julius of old where Misenus brave friend of Aeneas perished after besting jealous Triton on his conch. They took the first of a few urns of Tom's sweet ashes up to the top of the cape that overlooks the harbor within view of the lighthouse and the ageless Mediterranean sunset. After here, I'm not sure how, we suddenly find ourselves a world away amid rocky faces and primeval forests near the Germany-Luxembourg border where another one of Thomasito's urns they dropped. But from this point I must detour from Sheryl and Helen's sooner approach to Iberia. For there is another leg of trip I have in mind. I will have to hit the Low Countries on a separate "relaxing vacation" I think. I will need one full month to drink every beer the Walloons and Flemish brew, John Yarbrough, and another to smoke every stinky weed the dykey Dutch Boys grow, Eddie Rife. While I'm there maybe I'll finally learn how to pronounce Hayne de Ghizeghem, Stephen Sean Powell. If I don't drown in a canal first, Annette Patterson. That one will be for my dotage perhaps when I want to go out smokin', Brant Bingamon. They will peel my betuliped wooden-shoed ass off a blade of the Netherlands' worst windmill. Hm. Donald W. Bromley! He loves Pete Townshend. And Ken Nordine. No from here I must head south through France, yes there will be cathedrals, Gothic, buttressed, towering with kaleidoscopic windows, yes naturally I will spend an afternoon in Paris so I can listen for the echoes of Leonin and Perotin at Notre Dame, and show their waiters who can really be rude. I have a good hour penciled in for that, Stéphane Belleface. But I must make it down to the great sea again to Avignon where I can see what the hookers really look like there but mostly to osmose whatever produced such weird complex sweetly subtle virelais at the same time the friendly neighborhood Schismatic Pope held court only

yards away before I head toward the longest leg of my journey. This, Friends, is where I slip on some sensible loafers, tie my belongings onto the end of a stick, and join up with French routes down through the Pyrenees in pilgrimage toward the Camino de Santiago, carrying with me of course a facsimile of the Codex Calixtinus because duh I need my JAMS for a trip this long also there's good advice and prayers to the Archangel Raphael for protection and warding off contagions Tate Erlinger, and so then heading all points west through Navarra, La Rioja, and Castilla y Leon to the far end of Galicia and the Church at Compostela where the remains of Saint James the Great yes that Epistler who taught that faith without works is dead is some serious shit yes I must make it there to his shrine to uphold that faith professed with the mouth without works done with the hand breaks the 3rd Commandment Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain it's not Goddammit when you stub your toe it's Goddammit get up and do something you lazy selfish pampered choads who say Jesus every 3rd word and think that's all it is well no it's not prosperity gospel whores every time you say my name bitch you better have a good work for the hungry and suffering and lonely in that hand and no not for your damned brat children for somebody who really needs it so yes James yes with my scallop shells and my Codex Cal and Raphael Angel of the Trumpet at my side I will trek these dusty roads I will follow as in The Way starring Martin Sheen and directed by Emilio Estevez yes I will follow these sacred paths that have remained and brought travelers in mecca across the entirety of northern Spain to the Pilgrim's Mass there in the cathedral with two services at noon and 7:30 p.m. daily in an unending stream of peregrination that has continued unabated for the entire past 12 centuries! Maybe I'll thumb it part the way. Craig Harley would do the whole damned thing! But only then do I retake the Tiseths' southward trek through Porto yes there will be ports aplenty Rochelle Hamby down that strip of Portugal to the place of Holy Tony's birth! So here I am in Lisbon Tony, right back where you started in 1195. Your plainspoken nature is a perfect match for piacere of Italy or Texas for that matter. But here where you were born the patron saint is Vincent de Saragossa. How about that, Vinnie is also the patron saint of Vicenza further down the Bacchiglione from Padua, a town that never quite lived up to its more Venice-ward neighbor where you ended up. It's a little bit sad I'm a little bit sad

and a lot bit grateful and weary at this bar on the Tagus with the Portuguese guitars and the fado and my third glass of wine. Bacchiglione brings Bacchus along its stream, also wine is one of Venerated Vinnie's patronages, along with vinegar. Yes, the vinegar. That's the tartaric acidity bursting through the terroir. Along with a slight tannic astringency. No this is not quite piacere, it's a good kind of tired but there's a little too much of it. Way too much okay. You say it's just because after 4 months on this relaxing EUROPEAN ADVENTURE my funds are depleted and so I can only afford the cheap house wine. That's part of it, sure. Is this stuff even Portuguese? Give me that bottle, bartend. California?! Sigh. There it is. The saudades. See, that's what they have here in Lisbon. The Italians have piacere for days, over here it's saudades for years. They make feeble attempts to translate it as homesickness or nostalgia. Then they say it is the feeling of longing for something that has been forever lost or maybe even never could quite have been in our dreamy reflections and Venerated Vinnie rolls his eyes. You were great Holy Tony don't get me wrong. Shit the Baby Jesus had to pay you a visit to see for Himself how you made sense of things so easy. Easy to see why Frankie of Assisi was so eager to tonsure that good head with its useful tongue inside that later turned out to be incorrupt while the rest of ya had turned to shit. And Tony. Don't let me forget about the thing with the homily. The Benedictines said we thought YOU had the homily. Then YOUR OWN Franciscans said uh huh we thought that YOU had the homily! Then they's all arguing and suddenly one of 'em goes HEY TONY. They all gets quiet. HOWS BOUT YOU DELIVER THE HOMILY. And Tony. You stepped up and delivered the best Goddamned motherfucking homily them bald-headed sapsuckers on your side and brandy-chuffing bitchboys on their side ever heard themselves their whole damned stinking lives this side of Saint Paul's buttcrack. Tony you did it. You were there when they needed you. LEGEND. But Tony. Tony you know all about Vinnie. He was tortured and martyred. Tortured and martyred. They tortured and martyred Venerated Vinnie, Holy Tony. We need that vinegar. It's like the spongeful Reynolds Washam offers up to Jeezy on the end of a pole near the end of another period piece where Jared Leto is tackling the role now, as if he could possibly outdo Max von Sydow or Robert Powell. This isn't a glass of wine with a meal for passing the time with your laughing friends. This is no wine of piacere,

much less of a bacchanalia. This is medication. Pain relief. Analgesic. Anti-depressant. "No, alcohol is a depressant you'll just make it worse" lick my entire asshole clean twelve times with your mother's tongue. Should I? DO IT. Geoff Haba. Okay so I did the saudades in Lisbon I am almost finished but there is one last destination, I am trying to remember which lighthouse it was there on that Iberian shore where Thomas's two mamás left that last urnful of him. But I suppose my trip back to the States will depart from there. Holy Tony, you made good! You got out of Dodge and did some good work and now here across this huge ocean I live in a city they named after you where huge bubbas drive huge pickup trucks not just Dodge but Ford and Chevy and GMC and steel and size and scope and strength and girth and manliness and carbon generosity that make Venerated Vinnie laugh so hard he makes the Marx Brothers peer down to south central Texas to wonder what the hell is going on. I'm sorry, Antônio. That's what your mother called you. I do all I can do. I'll be back there soon, in San Antone. I feel a lot of hope there. Not everybody is completely lost. But there's just one last stop! Before I head home on the nearest shipping container. Gibraltar. I at least want to catch a glimpse across the Straits of that continent to the south. Thomas, your mother made her journey up here to honor you with her lovely wife but there is your father's side of you too. There it is over across that water. What a huge territory of space and time. And the original Old Masters of Music were there. Here in Europe things were pretty far along already by the time they got to the thing. Over there were the first who started to figure out the tones and timing and tuning and taste that have made the whole art of music possible.